

March 22, 1973

JL: Notes on conversation with Arthur Kornberg on route from Washington to San Francisco.

This was a discussion concerning the origins of his interest in the enzymology of DNA synthesis. He expressed his annoyance at two trends (1) the attribution that he decided to go into DNA work in consequence of Watson and Crick's formulation of its structure in 1953 and (2) that people like Luria, and I think he also mentioned Delbrück, set themselves up as the philosophers of the new biology and left it to the biochemist to merely work out the details. He was particularly critical with respect to the way that Delbrück used to shrug off any biochemical work of any description ignoring in particular the contributions that Seymour Cohen had made. In fact, Arthur himself seems to have been remarkably oblivious about the importance of DNA, but in this respect he was really not very different from my own recollective experience of people like David Green since there were very few biochemists interested in metabolism who strayed very far from intermediary metabolism in their investigations.

Arthur dates the beginning of his interest in DNA to his studies with Daft in nutrition and especially the effects of folic acid deprivation.